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**ECUADOR**

# GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

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*USAID's support of improved resources management and conservation has helped Ecuador achieve sustainable development and higher environmental standards. Through the preservation of natural resources such as carbon-storing forests, USAID has assisted Ecuador in addressing climate change while simultaneously protecting vulnerable ecosystems.*

**Background.** Ecuador, located on the northwestern coast of South America, comprises continental territory and the Galapagos Islands. It has four distinct geographical regions (coast, highlands, Amazon, and Galapagos), each with a unique climate and environment. Despite its small size, Ecuador also contains some of the world's greatest biodiversity. This biodiversity is threatened, however, by social, economic, political, and external pressures, the Colombian conflict among them. Furthermore, Ecuador's deforestation rate is the second highest in South America and the highest of any Amazonian country.<sup>1</sup> Its over-fishing rate remains alarming and affects the Galapagos Marine Reserve, the world's second largest protected marine area.

**Sector-Specific Climate Change Activities.** USAID's environmental program in Ecuador has initiated targeted efforts aimed at reducing resource-based conflicts and supporting the sustainable use and conservation of Ecuador's globally significant and economically important biological resources. To achieve these objectives, the program is creating direct incentives for conservation, adequate management of protected areas and indigenous territories, good local governance of natural resources, and sustainable financing of conservation activities.

*Addressing Climate Change Through Conservation of Carbon Stocks.* In the context of habitat conservation efforts, USAID supports activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions from forestry activities that help maintain and enhance carbon stocks and sinks. Four different programs in the Northern and Southern Border of Ecuador are implementing these efforts. International nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as CARE, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and other local partners are developing and supporting implementation of sustainable community-based and private forest management models on behalf of USAID. They also now have the ability to track deforestation through a USAID/Ecuador-supported geographic information system (GIS).

USAID is also supporting efforts to conserve forests managed by indigenous groups (the Awa, Cofan, and Huaorani) in collaboration with WWF, Chemonics, and TNC. These activities conserve forests ranging from the Choco-Darien-Western Ecuador Hotspot to the Amazonian Basin. This collaborative project is aimed at strengthening the ability of

<sup>1</sup> USAID, "Congressional Budget Justification-Ecuador," [http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2004/latin\\_america\\_caribbean/ecuador.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2004/latin_america_caribbean/ecuador.pdf)

**USAID's partners in climate change activities in Ecuador include\*:**

- Awa, Cofan, Huaorani, Shuar, and Achuar indigenous peoples
- Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, Inc. (CARE)
- Charles Darwin Foundation
- Chemonics
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
- Ecuadorian government agencies, including the Ministry of Environment

\* Because partners change as new activities arise, this list of partners is not comprehensive.

these groups and their communities to respond to various environmental threats, including incursions by large timber industries into valuable forest areas; increased access, colonization, and poor management resulting from oil and timber exploration; the paucity of incentives for conservation; insecure land titles; and weak public institutions. By helping the groups obtain and consolidate legal land titles and develop their technical capacity in sustainable forest use, USAID/Ecuador hopes to prevent the random deforestation and resource extraction that are threatening these areas today. In 2001, 1.4 million hectares were under improved management in Ecuador as a result of USAID-assisted community-based participatory natural resource management plans. Through the effective training of community park guards, paralegals, parabiologists, and paraforesters, this effort is helping poor rural communities manage the natural resources they rely on for survival wisely.

*Capacity Building.* NGO capacity building is a key element of USAID/Ecuador's environmental program, complementing on-the-ground activities related to natural resources management. Targeted local conservation organizations have been strengthened in their administrative, financial, and technical capabilities. As a result, these organizations have had access to other donors' funds and have significantly increased their financing by outside sources, thus securing their operations for the long term. The program has worked intensively for the conservation of species of high biological value. These efforts have resulted in increased environmental awareness and activism, which will ensure that future generations of Ecuadorians put higher intrinsic and economic value on maintaining and/or restoring these resources. Once this is achieved, sustainable conservation will continue far into the future after USAID's projects have been completed.

*Policies That Promote Sustainable Management of Vulnerable Ecosystems.* A previous USAID/Ecuador-supported project, Sustainable Uses for Biological Resources (SUBIR), played direct and indirect roles in shaping and implementing an entire policy framework governing the sound use and management of native forests in the country. The projects involving land tenure and forestry policy were especially significant, and some have been replicated or further advanced since the SUBIR project ended. To reduce deforestation and conserve more than 1.2 million hectares of indigenous territories, USAID is replicating SUBIR activities that worked to strengthen the capabilities of indigenous groups.

USAID/Ecuador also supported the development of improved policies, legal frameworks, and science-based regulations that played key roles in reducing the often violent conflict associated with managing the Galapagos Marine Reserve. The biologically rich Reserve (the focus of USAID/Ecuador's efforts in the Galapagos) was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in December 2001, a landmark victory for conservation and USAID. USAID also helped lay solid foundations for

developing community-based ecotourism on Isabela Island in the Galapagos, which will provide local residents with economically viable and environmentally sustainable alternatives to destructive over-fishing.

In addition, a USAID collaboration with TNC and other local partners in the Napo Watershed under the Condor Bioreserve project (five protected areas spanning high sierra and lowland tropical forest) is helping conserve high-altitude paramo grasslands and forests in a region that reportedly has the highest concentration of biological diversity in the Western Hemisphere.

For more information on USAID's climate change activities in Ecuador, visit USAID/Ecuador's Mission Web site at:

- <http://www.usaid.gov/ec/>